

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: Feb. 13, 2019

Agenda Item: Agricultural lease on Great Falls Shooting Complex

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

◆-----◆

Background: The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex consists of about 942 acres, three miles north of Great Falls. Of the land, FWP owns 582 acres, with the remaining 360 acres owned by the GFSSC. Of the total property, about 622 acres is leased cropland: 321.23 acres owned by FWP and 301.5 owned by GFSSC. A 10-year agricultural lease expired in 2011, and the tenant farmer has been operating under an automatic renewal annually since. The money earned by the tenant farmer was divided between the farmer and the GFSSC on a percentage basis. The GFSSC board of directors recently voted to find a new tenant farmer on a fixed price per acre basis.

Public Involvement Process &: A legal notice seeking applicants for a three-year agricultural lease was published twice, Aug. 8-9, 2018, in the Great Falls Tribune. Also, a news release was sent out Aug. 10, 2018. A successful application was submitted by Brad Myers, who lives near GFSSC. Mr. Myers said he would pay GFSSC \$32 an acre, for a yearly payment of \$19,928.32.

Alternatives and: The alternatives would be to continue an annual lease with the previous tenant farmer for considerably less payment: Annual percentage payments have ranged from about \$5,000 to \$19,860. The percentage payment system made budgeting difficult because each year's income fluctuated drastically. With the proposed set price per acre the GFSSC would be assured of a steady income, which could be adjusted when the three-year lease expires.

Agency Recommendation &: FWP recommends the commission endorse the efforts by the department and the GFSSC to find a new tenant farmer who would farm the entire acreage starting this year.

Proposed Motion:

I move that the commission accept the new tenant farmer application for the agricultural lease at the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex.